



Australian
Competition &
Consumer
Commission

Keeping baby safe

A GUIDE TO NURSERY FURNITURE



Keeping baby safe: a guide to nursery furniture

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
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Introduction

Providing and maintaining a safe environment for your baby can be a challenge for any parent. Children under five years old are more vulnerable to accidental death or injury than any other age group. However, most accidents are preventable.

Nursery furniture and equipment has been associated with more than 20 per cent of injuries to babies in their first year of life. The most common items associated with child injuries are prams and strollers, high chairs, baby walkers, bouncinettes, change tables and cots. Child deaths have been associated with cots, prams and strollers.

This book identifies some of the high risk products for babies. The 'before you buy' sections for each product type list what to look for when buying new or second-hand products. You can also use the tips in the 'safety at home' sections to provide a safe home environment for your baby.

While potential hazards change as your baby develops, keep these key safety rules in mind:

- follow the advice on product warning labels
- use products according to the manufacturer's instructions and their intended use
- check products regularly for wear and tear.

Buying nursery furniture and equipment

Serious accidents involving baby products occur every year. To reduce the chance of this happening to your family, it is important that you select and buy safe products for your baby.

There are many products on the market for babies and it can be confusing to understand all the safety considerations when making a selection. While this book identifies some specific risks for products, there are some general rules to consider.

- If you are buying new furniture or equipment, ask the retailer if it has been made according to Australian standards. Compliance with these standards ensures that the product meets minimum safety and design requirements.
- If you are buying or borrowing second-hand products it is important that these products comply with the checks in this guide. Wear and tear, or any modifications made to the products may make the item unsafe.
- Check furniture carefully—it should be free of rough surfaces, sharp edges, points and protrusions. It should be sturdily constructed so that it will not collapse when in use, and all locking devices should function properly.



- Before buying nursery furniture be aware of how to create a safe sleeping environment for your child. Some items such as cot bumpers, doonas, quilts and pillows may increase the risk of sudden infant death syndrome and sleeping accidents. For information on reducing the risk of SIDS contact the SIDS organisation in your state or territory on 1300 308 307, or visit the SIDS and Kids website www.sidsandkids.org.

Warranties

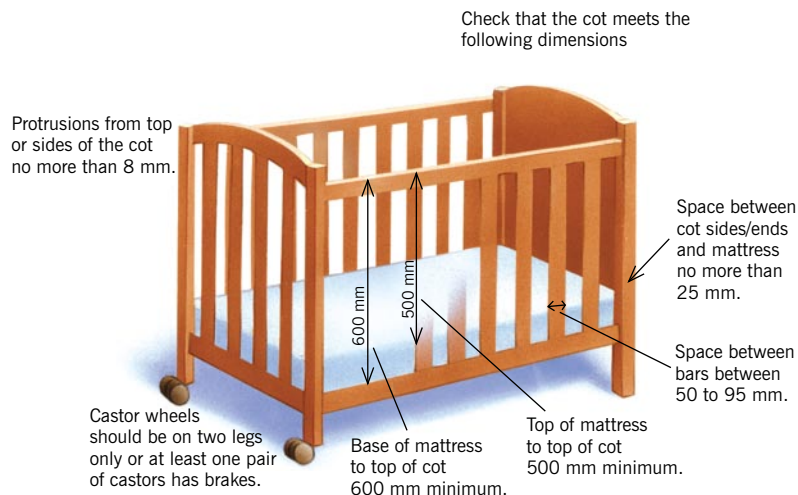
New furniture and equipment comes with an implied warranty that the product is fit for the intended use. You will usually receive a warranty card with the product. If you complete the card and return it to the manufacturer, you can be notified of any future safety problems. You don't have to return the warranty card to the manufacturer to be able to enforce your implied rights. If you find a safety fault you should notify the manufacturer quickly.

Household cots

Babies and young children spend a lot of their time sleeping, so it is important that you ensure cots are safe. Cots have been associated with fatal injuries in children under 12 months old. Young babies are vulnerable to suffocating or choking, and toddlers are at risk of injury from falling while trying to climb out of the cot.

Cot injuries can happen if a child's head, arms or legs are trapped between the bars and panels, between the sides and the mattress or if their clothing is caught on the cot. When a child starts to climb, they have outgrown their cot and it's time to move your child to a single bed.

Changes to the standard for Children's Household Cots AS/NZS 2172 in 2003 amended some of the prescribed measurements. Many cots currently in use are made to the previous standard, and the measurements given as a guide in this book are applicable to cots made to either standard.



Before you buy

- Select a cot that complies with the mandatory safety standard based on the Australian Standard for household cots AS/NZS 2172. Look for a label or sticker that says the cot complies with the mandatory standard. If there isn't one, ask the retailer. If the retailer cannot verify that it complies, do not buy it. All cots sold, even second-hand ones, must comply with this standard.
- Check that bars, panels, mattress base and drop sides are firmly attached.
- Take a tape measure with you when you go shopping so you can check the size of gaps and openings:
 - the mattress must fit snugly to within 25 mm of sides and ends
 - with the mattress base set in the lower position, the cot sides or end need to be at least 500 mm higher than the mattress
 - the spacing between the bars or panels in the cot sides and ends needs to be between 50 mm and 95 mm—gaps wider than 95 mm can trap a child's head. If the bars or panels are made from flexible material, the maximum spacing between the bars or panels should be less than 95 mm
 - check that there are no small holes or openings between 5 mm and 12 mm wide that small fingers can be caught in
 - check that there are no spaces between 30 mm and 50 mm that could trap your child's arms or legs
 - check there are no fittings (including bolts, knobs and corner posts) that might catch onto your child's clothing and cause distress or strangulation.

Safety at home

- ✗ Do not use U or V shaped pillows for children under two years old. It is safer not to use a pillow at all for children under two.
- ✗ Do not allow small objects that could cause your child to choke to be placed in the cot, or anywhere accessible to your child.
- ✗ Never use electric blankets or hot water bottles for babies or young children.
- ✗ Do not leave mobiles or toys with stretch/elastic cords in cots.

- ✓ Make sure the space above the cot is free of objects such as pictures or mirrors which could fall onto your child.
- ✓ Make sure the cot has no more than two legs with castors, or that at least one pair of castors has brakes.
- ✓ Keep the cot clear of heaters, stoves and power points.
- ✓ Keep the cot clear of curtain or blind cords as they are a strangulation hazard.
- ✓ Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully (and keep them somewhere safe).
- ✓ Regularly check that nuts and bolts are tight, as per the maintenance instructions supplied with the cot.
- ✓ Set the mattress base to the lowest position before your baby can sit up.
- ✓ Remove climbing aids (such as a large toy) from the cot once your child can stand.

Second-hand and heirloom cots

Second-hand and heirloom cots can be a hazard to children because:

- the spacing between the bars may be too wide and trap a child's head or may be too narrow and trap a child's arms or legs
- the catches on the side of the cot may be easy for a child to undo
- older, painted cots may be painted with lead paint that the child may chew on and swallow when they are teething
- the corners of the cot can catch on the child's clothes and create a strangulation hazard.

Portable cots

Portable cots must be assembled correctly so that they cannot collapse while a baby is in them. Some states and territories have banned the sale and supply of some older models of portable cots with an unreliable folding mechanism. Contact your local fair trading office for further information on this product—see contacts at the back of this book.

A new mandatory safety standard for portable cots comes into effect from 1 March 2009.

Portable cots supplied after that date must meet essential safety specifications.

Before you buy

- Look for a model that meets the voluntary Australian Standard AS/NZS 2195 for portable cots. Look for a label or sticker that says the portable cot complies with this voluntary standard. If there isn't one, ask the retailer. If the retailer cannot verify that it complies, ask if there is any alternative that does comply.
- Before you buy a new or second-hand portable cot, make sure that all the locking devices are secure when the cot is assembled and that your child cannot release them and collapse the cot.
- If buying a second-hand portable cot, check there are no tears in the mesh or fabric sides and no cracks in the side rails.
- Follow the assembly instructions closely when setting up the cot.

Safety at home

- ✗ Do not use a portable cot if your child weighs more than 15 kg (or check instructions for your particular model).
- ✗ Check all locking devices are properly latched before putting a child in the cot. Stop using the cot before your child is able to release the locking devices and collapse it.
- ✗ Do not put pillows or an additional mattress in a portable cot. Babies can become trapped between the mattress and cot sides and may suffocate. Older children may use the extra height to help them climb out.

- ✓ Check vinyl or fabric-covered rails frequently for tears—a teething child can chew off pieces and choke.
- ✓ Remove all toys from the cot when the child is sleeping.
- ✓ Repair tears in mesh or fabric sides immediately.
- ✓ Regularly check locking devices to ensure they are operating properly and have not become loose.
- ✓ Keep the portable cot clear of curtain or blind cords as they are a strangulation hazard.
- ✓ Keep the cot away from heaters, stoves and power points.

Bassinettes and rocking cradles

Some people prefer to use a bassinette or cradle for their baby's first few months. The most frequent injuries associated with bassinets or cradles are babies falling—either when the bottom of the bassinette or cradle breaks, or when it tips over. It is also possible for the baby to suffocate if pillows or folded quilts are used as mattresses.

A bassinette or rocking cradle would normally be used for a short period as once babies become active it is safer to move them to a cot. Some babies outgrow a bassinette or rocking cradle by about three months old.



Before you buy

Bassinette

- Look for a bassinette with a sturdy bottom and a wide, stable base.

Rocking cradle

- If you are buying a rocking cradle, make sure that it complies with the safety requirements of the voluntary Australian Standard AS/NZS 4385. Look for a label or sticker that says the rocking cradle complies with this voluntary standard. If there isn't one, ask the retailer. If the retailer cannot verify that it complies, ask if there is any alternative that does comply.
- Make sure the cradle has a permanent child-resistant locking device to prevent the cradle from rocking while unattended.
- Rocking cradles should have a tilt limiter to limit the angle of tilt to no more than 10 degrees from the horizontal.

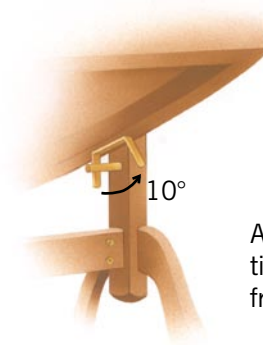
Bassinettes and rocking cradles

- Follow the manufacturer's guidelines on the appropriate weight and size of babies who can safely use the product.
- The sides should be at least 300 mm high measured from the top of the mattress base.
- Make sure the mattress is a snug fit and is not thicker than 75 mm.

Safety at home

- ✗ Never use pillows or folded quilts in the bassinette or cradle.

- ✓ Keep the bassinette or cradle clear of curtains, blinds, heaters or power points.
- ✓ Follow the manufacturer's assembly instructions.
- ✓ Regularly check that screws and bolts are tight.
- ✓ If the product has folding legs, make sure they cannot accidentally fold during use.
- ✓ The mattress should fit snugly and be firm and smooth to avoid smothering the baby's face.
- ✓ Decorative bows and ribbons should be trimmed short and stitched securely to prevent strangulation.
- ✓ Secure a rocking cradle with the locking pin whenever you leave the baby, so that the cradle will not move when you are not there to supervise.

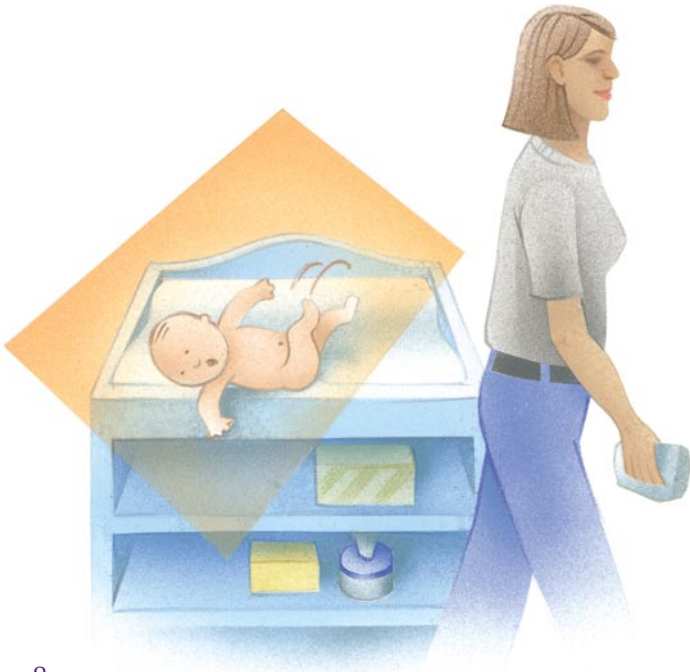


A tilt limiter limits the angle of tilt to no more than 10 degrees from the horizontal.

Change tables

If you use a change table, be aware that your baby will require constant supervision when on it. Injuries from falling off a change table include serious head injuries. Most injuries occur when a baby rolls off the table onto the floor or onto another piece of furniture. A baby can roll off a change table before anyone realises it can even roll at all.

Never leave a baby unattended on a change table.



Before you buy

- Consider whether you really want to use a change table, or if you wish to change your baby on a large doubled-over towel on the floor.
- Only buy a change table that has some form of roll-off protection such as a child safety harness, and raised sides and ends at least 100 mm high.
- Make sure there are no gaps or spaces near the changing surface that could trap a child's fingers, head or limbs.
- If it's a folding table, make sure all locking devices work.

Safety at home

- ✗ Never leave a baby unattended on a change table. Ignore distractions (such as the telephone) while you change the baby. If you must attend to an emergency, put your baby in a safe place first, or take the baby with you. Even a very young baby can wriggle and fall from a change table in less time than it takes to answer the phone.
- ✗ Do not leave open pins, bottles, lotions or creams where the baby can reach them.

- ✓ Use safety harnesses at all times.
- ✓ Have everything you need to change the baby close at hand.
- ✓ Make sure no small objects that could cause choking are within your baby's reach.
- ✓ Ensure collapsible frames are locked securely in place before use.
- ✓ Repair any loose or broken parts straight away.

High chairs

Child injuries involving high chairs are mainly due to falls caused by the child standing up or trying to climb into or out of the chair. Continual supervision and the proper use of restraints will substantially reduce the risk of injury.



Before you buy

- For maximum safety, choose a high chair fitted with a five-point harness (crotch strap between the legs, straps over both shoulders and a waist belt).
- If you are buying a second-hand high chair that doesn't have a proper harness, buy a harness separately and clip or attach it securely.
- Check that the construction and framework is sturdy and robust. Put some weight on the seat and backrest to see if they squeak, sag, deform, move out of position, or collapse.
- Check that folding high chairs are stable and that the locks work. Ask for a demonstration.
- Check that moving parts cannot pinch, crush or trap a child's finger, toe, limb or head.
- Check for sharp edges and points along the edges of the chair and tray, and for any easily detachable parts which could pose a choking hazard.
- If the high chair has four castors fitted, make sure at least one pair (either front or back) has brakes.

Safety at home

- ✗ Never leave your child unattended in a high chair. If you need to leave the room, take your child with you.
 - ✗ Do not allow a child to stand up in a high chair or climb into or out of it unassisted, as the chair may become unstable.
-
- ✓ Use the five-point harness from the very beginning and your baby will grow to accept it. Make sure it is fitted every time.
 - ✓ Ensure the high chair is at least 500 mm away from windows, unsecured doorways, stoves, appliance cords, curtains or blind cords.
 - ✓ Fix any loose nuts and broken parts straight away.
 - ✓ Repair exposed foam in the seat or back to prevent baby from choking on foam pieces.
 - ✓ Make sure your child's hands are clear of moving parts when the tray is raised and lowered.
 - ✓ Make sure a child cannot push against a vertical surface (such as a wall or cupboards) and push the chair over.
 - ✓ Place the high chair out of reach when not in use.

Prams and strollers

Child deaths have occurred when a child is left to sleep in a pram or stroller with the backrest reclined. While asleep, the child may wriggle towards the end of the stroller where they are vulnerable to being strangled or smothered. The child can also slip off the backrest and be caught in the straps.

Never leave a child unattended in a pram or stroller.

Injuries involving prams and strollers are often caused by the child falling from the stroller or the stroller tipping backwards because it is overloaded. Overloading frequently occurs when bags are placed over the pram's handles. Injuries also occur when a child attempts to stand up while in the pram or stroller.



Before you buy

- Before buying a pram or stroller, decide what your requirements are. Consider whether you will need a convertible pram or stroller that will fit in your car, and whether you require a lightweight and easy to use model.
- Check for compliance with the mandatory safety standard for prams and strollers based on Australian Standard AS/NZS 2088. Look for a label or sticker that says the pram or stroller complies with the mandatory standard. If there isn't one, ask the retailer. If the retailer cannot verify that it complies, ask if there is any alternative that does comply.
- Check that the pram or stroller is supplied with a tether strap to help stop it rolling away.
- Make sure the pram or stroller is fitted with a restraint harness (a crotch strap between the legs, straps that go over both shoulders and a waist belt). If not, buy one separately and have it fitted.
- Look for strong components which feel rigid and not rickety. The pram or stroller should be easy to steer with solid and durable wheel components. Wheel locks must work.
- If the pram or stroller folds up for carrying make sure frame locks are operating properly and that it won't collapse during use. Learn how to fold and use the pram or stroller before leaving the store and make sure you have been given all instructions.
- Make sure that the footrest on the pram or stroller is strong and secure, and that the pram/stroller is generally stable. A weak footrest may give way and cause the baby to be trapped.
- Check there are no gaps that could trap a head, fingers or limbs.
- Adjustable recline positions should lock securely.
- Consider a pram that has a carry basket fitted that will not tip or rock the pram when loaded with shopping (usually centrally located underneath).

Safety at home

- ✗ Do not leave a child unattended in a pram or stroller. It is not safe for a child to sleep unattended in a pram or stroller as they may get caught in its structure or unbalance the pram or stroller and tip it over. Another child may climb on and tip over or push the pram or stroller into a dangerous situation.
- ✗ Do not allow more than the intended number of child occupants in the pram or stroller. This could create tip-over hazards.
- ✗ Do not place a baby under six months old in a stroller unless the backrest can be adjusted to an angle of more than 130 degrees to the seat.
- ✗ Do not overload a pram or stroller or create a tip-over hazard by hanging shopping bags from its handles.
- ✗ Do not let a child stand on or lean out of a pram or stroller.
- ✗ Do not use a pillow or cushion in the pram or stroller because it can cause instability and possible suffocation.
- ✗ Avoid pushing loaded strollers or prams up or down stairs, over curbs or very rough ground. Use lifts rather than stairs or escalators when transporting children in prams or strollers.

- ✓ Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- ✓ Check all frame catches are locked in place and fabric fastenings are secured before use.
- ✓ A harness should be used from the first time a child is placed in a pram or stroller to get them used to being secured.
- ✓ Remove your child from the pram or stroller before making any adjustments as small fingers may become caught in the folding mechanism.

Bouncinettes and rocker chairs



The most common injuries to babies using bouncinettes or rocker chairs happen when the bouncinette or rocker falls from a high surface (such as a table or bench). Similarly, carrying a baby in a bouncinette can result in injury as the bouncinette or the baby may fall from your arms. If not supervised, babies may also be able to slip out of a bouncinette and get caught in the straps.

Never leave a baby unsupervised in a bouncinette or a rocker.

Before you buy

- Make sure the bouncinette has a waist and crotch strap to secure the baby. Rocker chairs should have a five-point restraint harness (a crotch strap between the legs, straps that go over both shoulders and a waist belt).
- Look for a solid base, wider and longer than the area where the baby lies.
- Look for rubber tips (or similar) on the base to stop it 'walking' as the baby rocks.

Safety at home

- ✗ Never place a bouncinette or rocker on a table or other raised surface.
 - ✗ Stop using the bouncinette or rocker when the baby begins to roll.
 - ✗ Never carry a baby in a bouncinette or rocker.
 - ✗ Never leave a baby asleep unsupervised in a bouncinette or a rocker.
-
- ✓ Use a harness from the first time a child is placed in a bouncinette or rocker so that the child gets used to being secured.
 - ✓ Position the bouncinette or rocker in a safe, flat place away from stairs.
 - ✓ Place the bouncinette or rocker clear of hazards such as heaters and kitchen stoves.
 - ✓ Place the bouncinette or rocker clear of curtain and blind cords as they are a strangulation hazard.

Baby bath aids

Baby bath aids come in a range of styles from bath rings and seats to bathing cradles. The suitability of these products changes as your baby grows.

Six babies under 13 months have drowned in a bath seat or other support in Australia over 10 years. Many more babies have come close to drowning. These accidents happen when a child is left alone in a seat in the bath while their carer attends to tasks like answering the phone or preparing the child's clothes.

Baby bath aids are designed to ease the strain on the carer's back while bathing a child. They are not safe without the presence and close supervision of an adult carer. It is best to always keep hold of the baby even when using a bath aid.

**Bath aids are not a safety device—
it is not safe to leave your child in a
bath seat while you attend to other duties.**



Before you buy

- Check that the warning label about safe use is clearly displayed.
- Check that there are no sharp edges or points on the bath aid.
- Check that your child fits properly into the bath aid.
- If you are considering a second-hand baby bath aid, carefully check it for broken or worn parts that could make it unsafe.
- A second-hand baby bath aid may not comply with the current safety regulations and may not carry a safety warning.

Safety at home

- ✗ Never leave your young child alone in a bath.
- ✗ Never leave your young child in the bath in the care of an older sibling.
- ✗ Don't use a baby bath seat with suction cups in a bath with an uneven or slip-resistant base, or where the enamel is worn—the suction cups will not stick to the bath surface.

- ✓ Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully.
- ✓ Prepare the child's clothes and towel before running a bath.
- ✓ Keep water to a minimum depth, using only enough water to wet the child using your hands.
- ✓ Ignore the telephone and the doorbell—if you need to leave the bathroom, take your child with you.
- ✓ Know how to perform resuscitation and CPR for infants.

The Royal Life Saving Society Australia conducts infant resuscitation training. For details please contact the Royal Life Saving Society branch in your state or territory—see contacts at the back of this book.

Babies dummies

Dummies are designed to help comfort and settle children, but can be a potential hazard to infants and young toddlers.

Poorly designed or manufactured dummies can break apart into small parts that can be a choking hazard. Children under three are particularly vulnerable to choking as they have not yet developed the reflex action to cough up objects that lodge in their throats.

Dummies attached to children's clothes by a ribbon or string can be a strangulation hazard if they wrap around a child's neck.

A mandatory standard for babies dummies (under the *Trade Practices Act 1974*) was introduced in October 2006. The standard prescribes a safe shield size and shape, ventilation holes, secure teat attachment and structural integrity. It also requires product packaging to have a label warning parents not to tie the dummy around their baby's neck.



Never leave a baby with a dummy in their mouth if they cannot remove it on their own.

Before you buy

- Choose a dummy with a shield and ventilation holes to prevent suffocation if a baby places the whole dummy in their mouth.

Safety at home

- ✗ Never tie a dummy on a string or ribbon around the baby's neck or attach it to the side of the cot—both represent strangulation hazards.
- ✗ Never leave a dummy in direct sunlight as this can cause rubber to perish.
- ✓ Check the dummy every time before use by pulling hard on the teat and tugging on the handle and ring to make sure they will not give way under pressure.
- ✓ Check the teat for wear and tear—if it looks worn or damaged, throw the dummy away.
- ✓ Sterilise or wash the dummy regularly. Wash in hot soapy water, rinse and air dry.
- ✓ As far as possible, supervise your baby—never leave a baby with a dummy in their mouth if they could not remove it on their own.

Cot and bed restraints

Not recommended

Consumer protection agencies advise that cot and bed restraints may be a strangulation hazard for children and should not be used.

Consult a doctor or your child/maternal health nurse if you are considering using this product. Your child may be at risk with this product if they have a medical condition.

Safety at home

- ✗ Not recommended for use unless advised by a doctor or child/maternal health nurse.
- ✓ Use the cot or bed restraint only on the advice of your doctor or child/maternal health nurse.
- ✓ If you are advised to use a restraint, remove it from the cot or bed when it is not in use.

Back pack and baby carriers

Framed baby carriers should not be used before a baby is four to five months old. By this age the baby's neck should be able to withstand jolts and not sustain an injury.

Before you buy

- Buy a carrier to match your baby's size and weight and with a frame to suit your height and size. Try it on with the baby in it, and check for:
 - enough depth to support the baby's back
 - leg openings small enough to prevent the baby from slipping out
 - leg openings big enough to avoid chafing the baby's legs.
- Look for restraining straps, including over the baby's shoulders.
- Look for sturdy materials and heavy duty fasteners.
- Look for padding on the metal frame near the baby's face to protect the baby from bumps.
- Check for sharp points, edges or rough surfaces.

Safety at home

- ✓ Use the restraining straps at all times.
- ✓ If leaning over, bend from the knees never from the waist to prevent the baby from falling out.
- ✓ If bending down, make sure the child is not able to reach hazards, such as pulling hot drinks off the bench.
- ✓ Be sure the child's fingers are clear of the frame joints when folding the carrier.
- ✓ Regularly check the carrier for ripped seams, missing or loose fasteners, frayed seats or straps. Repair them promptly or discard the carrier.

Playpens

See also portable cots

Children become increasingly mobile and exploratory during their first 12 months and a playpen can restrict your child's play area and help you to supervise your child.

If you are choosing a playpen for your child, take note of the consumer tips below and ensure you select a sturdy frame that will keep your child free from harm. From nine months old, your child is likely to begin to pull themselves up and onto their feet, lean against the playpen side and attempt to climb over the sides of the frame.

Before you buy

- Check that the playpen folding mechanism latches securely when assembled and that a child cannot release the latches.
- Check that the playpen has no sharp fittings or parts that might snag clothing—this can be a strangulation hazard.
- Choose heavy playpens over lighter models which may tip over if a child leans against the sides.
- As a guide, a playpen should be more than 500 mm high and the spaces between the side bars should be between 50 mm and 95 mm. Larger gaps can trap a child's head.

Safety at home

- ✗ Do not place objects against or inside the playpen that may help the child to climb over the sides.
- ✓ Keep the playpen clear of heaters, stoves and power points.
- ✓ Keep the playpen away from dangling cords from blinds and curtains as these may become caught around the baby's neck.

Baby exercise jumpers

Not recommended

A baby exercise jumper is usually a suspended sling-style seat hanging from a spring and/or rubber cable that is clamped above a door architrave. The baby bounces in the seat by pushing with their feet against the floor.

Injuries have occurred while using these products when the laces (sewn into the crotch strap and threaded through the eyelets on the waiststrap) snapped under the tension of a bouncing baby, causing the baby to fall. Injuries have also occurred when babies have lurched sideways into the doorway frame, or been pushed by another young child.

Child safety experts recommend a stationary play centre as a safer alternative.

Safety at home

- ✗ Do not leave the baby in the jumper for more than 15 minutes. Overuse of the jumper could lead to developmental delays when the child is learning to walk.
- ✓ Always supervise your child in the jumper.
- ✓ Always check that the equipment is securely attached above the doorway, and that the baby is securely fitted into the harness.
- ✓ Cover the spring and chain as it can entrap and pinch little fingers.
- ✓ Check the laces regularly to ensure they are in good condition and securely attached.

Baby walkers

Not recommended



Baby walkers can be dangerous as they allow infants to move more quickly around the house, and to grab things normally out of their reach. As a result, they face dangers they would not otherwise experience until a later age—such as reaching bench tops and pulling boiling kettles or irons down onto themselves, falling down stairs or reaching open fires or heaters. A baby in a walker can also tip over on uneven surfaces. For these reasons, they are not recommended.

Child safety experts recommend a stationary play centre as a safer alternative.

Before you buy

- Check for compliance with the mandatory safety standard for baby walkers based on the US ASTM F977 safety standard for baby walkers. Look for a label or sticker that says the baby walker complies with the mandatory standard. If there isn't one, ask the retailer. If the retailer cannot verify that it complies, ask if there is an alternative that does comply.
- Older second-hand baby walkers may not comply with the national safety standard introduced in November 2002 and other state and territory legislation. The safety standard requires baby walkers to have minimum levels of stability, an automatic braking system (so they cannot be easily ridden down stairs), and safety warning labels.
- Check that warning labels about safe use are clearly displayed.
- Look for an automatic braking mechanism to prevent it being ridden over a step.
- Check that any folding mechanism latches securely and will not collapse when assembled.
- Check that there are no sharp edges or points or places that can trap fingers.
- Check that your child fits properly into the baby walker.
- Look for a baby walker with an optional locking device to immobilise the baby walker when required.

Safety at home

- ✗ Never leave your child in a walker unsupervised. Your child in a walker should be within the reach of an adult at all times so they can prevent the child accessing hazardous locations.
 - ✗ Do not leave the child in the walker for more than 15 minutes. Overuse of the walker can lead to developmental delays when the child is learning to walk.
-
- ✓ Baby walkers should only be used in a safe and flat area. Block off access to areas such as staircases, kitchens and fireplaces.
 - ✓ Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully.

Safety gates

As your child grows and starts roaming, safety gates or barriers can close off rooms that haven't been child-proofed. A gate can also be used to deter children from accessing potentially dangerous places like staircases. Some styles of safety gates have caused significant injuries. There are two types of safety gates:

- Pressure mounted—easy to set up and take down. The gate is tightened between two solid wall surfaces. These work well in doorways where there is solid wood construction. However, they cannot withstand as much pressure as hardware-mounted gates.
- Hardware (wall) mounted—attached with screws directly into a solid wall or wood post. They are often made from wood, plastic, metal or mesh.

A pet gate may not be safe for a baby or toddler.

Before you buy

- Determine where the safety gate is going to be used; for example, it is not recommended that a pressure mounted safety gate be used for the top of a staircase, nor should the gate open out over the stairs. Pressure-mounted gates fit regular-sized door openings, and hardware (wall) mounted gates are available up to about four metres wide.
- Check that gaps between the bars are between 50 mm and 95 mm to avoid head entrapment.
- You may need the convenience and safety of being able to open the safety gate with one hand.
- Some hardware (wall) mounted gates can form angles to cover odd-shaped areas like hot tubs and fireplaces.
- A fixed horizontal bar at the bottom of a gate when opened can be a tripping hazard.
- Do not buy the older crisscross diamond-shaped accordion gates, which have been known to entangle clothing and heads.

Safety at home

- ✗ Do not step over a safety gate while carrying a child.
- ✓ Ensure the safety gate is securely attached.

Child car restraints

Child restraints in cars are very important as they greatly reduce the risk of your child being injured or killed if you have an accident. Before you buy or rent a restraint, check that it has a label showing it complies with the Australian Standard AS/NZS 1754. Australian road laws say that you must not use a restraint if it does not comply with the Australian Standard.

Each child restraint must be correctly installed and be appropriate for the weight and size of your child. The restraint must be used on every trip.

Always use a restraint for your child in the car.

For more information see
contacts for child car restraints
in the back of this book.



Before you buy

- Look for a label or sticker that says the child restraint complies with the mandatory safety standard, Australian Standard AS/NZS 1754. If there isn't one—ask the retailer. If the retailer cannot show you that it complies do not buy it.
- Make sure the restraint is suitable for your child's weight and size and always follow the manufacturer's guidelines.

Child's weight	Appropriate restraint (complying with AS/NZS1754)
Up to 9 kg (or 70 cm in length)	Infant restraint rearward facing
8 kg to 18 kg	Child seat forward facing
14 kg to 26 kg	Booster seat Children outgrow the booster seat when they outgrow its weight range, or when their eyes are level with the top of the seat back or head rest when seated on the booster
14 kg to 32 kg	Child safety harness

- Make sure the restraint is suitable for your vehicle.
- You may need to have an extra anchorage point fitted in your car (and/or an extension strap).
- Do not buy a used child restraint if it has been in an accident or shows signs of wear such as cracks, frayed straps or broken buckles. Make sure it complies with Australian Standard AS/NZS 1754.

- Restraints over 10 years old should not be used. They may lose their reliability and may not provide adequate protection for a child in case of an impact.
- If you wish to use a rearward facing infant restraint in a position where an airbag is fitted, you must check with the vehicle manufacturer first that it is safe to do so.
- Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Safety at home

- ✗ Never carry any unrestrained passengers in your car.

- ✓ Child restraints generally must be fitted in the rear seat. Booster seats can be used in the front passenger seat under certain circumstances.
- ✓ Always follow the manufacturer's fitting instructions exactly. If you don't have fitting instructions or they are hard to understand, contact the manufacturer or an authorised safety restraint fitting station. Some specialist retailers offer an installation service.
- ✓ Make sure the restraint is properly fitted and adjusted. The baby seat restraint or harness should fit snugly (with no slack) and shouldn't be twisted.
- ✓ Always make sure your child uses the restraint properly every trip. Teach your child to always ask to use a restraint or seat belt.
- ✓ Restraints are necessary even when driving at low speeds or on short trips—you never know when a crash may happen. Many accidents occur within 10 km of home.

Bunk beds

Bunk beds are not suitable for children under the age of six. Children are at risk of injury in a bunk bed up until they are nine years old. Dangers include falling from the top bunk or trapping small heads and limbs, often leading to serious or even fatal injuries.

Never let children use bunk beds as a play area.



Before you buy

- Select a bunk bed that complies with the mandatory safety standard based on the Australian Standard for bunk beds AS/NZS 4220. Look for a label or sticker that says the bunk bed complies with the mandatory standard. If there isn't one, ask the retailer. If the retailer cannot verify that it complies, do not buy it.
- Check that there are no gaps sized 95 mm to 230 mm in any part of the bed, including guardrails, to prevent children trapping their heads.
- Look for guardrails or bed-ends on all sides of the upper bed, ensuring that the tops of the guardrails are at least 160 mm (about the length of a ball point pen) above the top of the mattress, to prevent children rolling out.
- Check that ladders are firmly fixed and stable.
- Check that all tube ends are plugged on metal tubular bunk beds.
- Check that all nuts and bolts are flush and smooth, and there are no protrusions of more than 8 mm that could catch onto clothing.

Safety at home

- ✗ Do not let children use bunk beds as a play area. Many injuries occur when children fall from the top bunk while playing.
- ✗ Keep bunk beds away from ceiling fans.
- ✓ Regularly check that nuts and bolts are tight.

Bean bags

Not recommended for small children

Young children have died by inhaling the small polystyrene beads contained in bean bags. If you have any polystyrene bead products (such as bean bags, pet beds, bean-filled soft toys and aqua bean bags used in swimming pools) you should ensure that the filling is not accessible to children.

Before you buy

- Check that the bean bag complies with the mandatory safety standard for bean bags.
- Bean bags must use child-resistant slide fasteners, and display a permanent warning of the dangers that polystyrene beads present to young children.
- Every bean bag, bean bag cover and package of every description containing bean bag filling must have fixed securely to it the following warning:

WARNING: Small Lightweight Beads Present a Severe Danger to Children if Swallowed or Inhaled.

Safety at home

- ✗ Never place a baby or young child on a bean bag as the bean bag may cover the baby's face and make breathing difficult, causing asphyxia.
- ✓ If you have any polystyrene-filled products you should ensure that children do not have access to the beads. You can remove the danger by sewing the zippers shut or remove the tag on the zipper closer. If the tag has been removed, a paper clip or piece of wire threaded through the closer will allow you to open the zipper when necessary (but remember to remove the paper clip or wire after use).

Toy boxes

Toy boxes can help keep bedrooms tidy, but they can also be dangerous. Injuries and deaths of young children have been recorded in Australia and overseas from toy box lids falling onto a child's head or neck. There have also been cases where children have been trapped inside toy boxes.

Children up to the age of two are most at risk. Children may have the strength to lift the lid, but when they look into the box the lid could fall onto their head or neck.



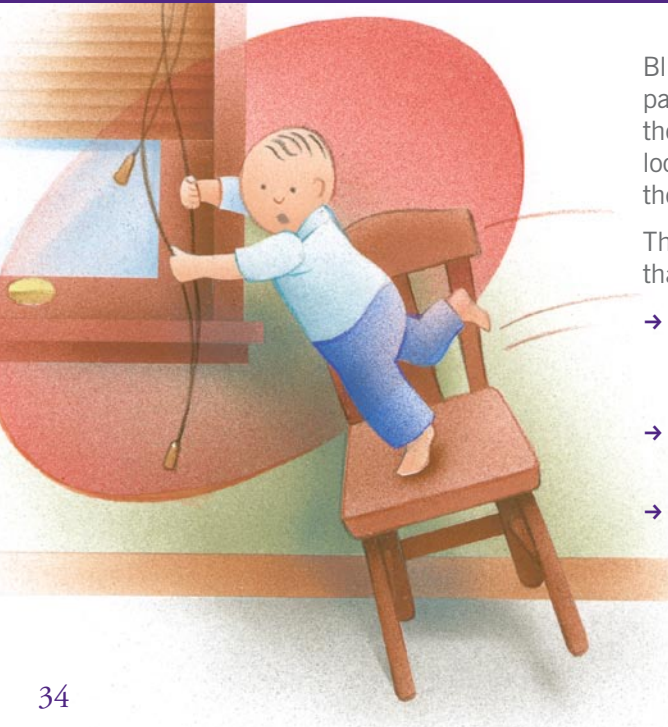
Before you buy

- Buy a toy box without a lid—plastic crates are safer.
- If you buy a toy box with a lid, the lid should be lightweight and removable.
- If there is a lock on a toy box lid, make sure it is easy for a child to open from inside.
- Make sure the toy box has ventilation holes to stop suffocation if a child climbs inside and the lid closes.
- Make sure the toy box lid has rubber or other stoppers that allow a gap of 12 mm or more when the lid is closed so that small fingers can't be crushed, and to assist in providing ventilation.

Safety at home

- ✓ If the toy box has a heavy lid, think about removing it to avoid the risk of injury.

Blind and curtain cords



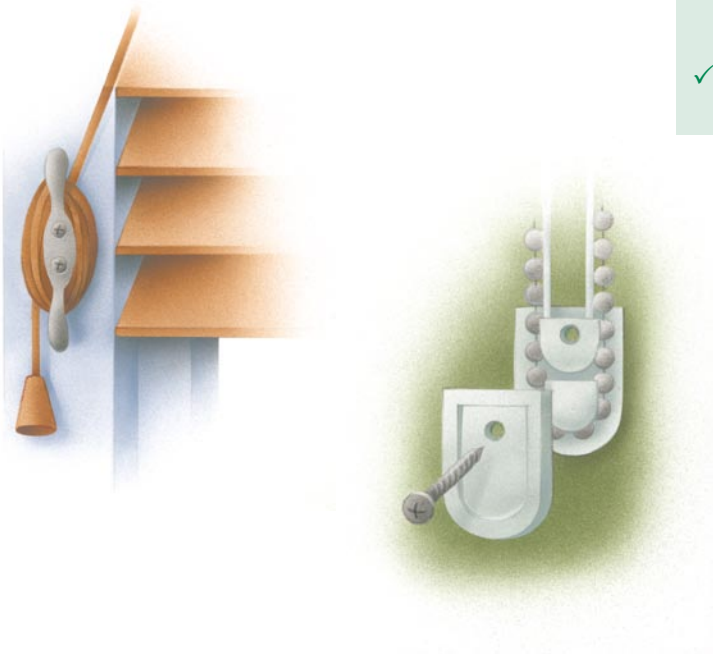
Blind and curtain cords can be dangerous for babies and young children—particularly those under the age of three. Children can injure or even strangle themselves on blind and curtain cords. A child can place their head in the loop created by a blind cord, then if the child tries to sit, or falls down, they can hang themselves in the loop.

There are several safety steps you can apply to minimise this risk and ensure that curtain and blind cords are not left hanging within the reach of a child:

- If you have vertical blinds, install a cord tensioning device (available from hardware stores or curtain shops) which encloses the cord or chain loops.
- If you have blind cords, wrap the cord around a cleat (available from hardware stores) attached to the wall near the top of the curtain or blind.
- The bottom of any cord should be as far out of a child's reach as possible, but at least 1600 mm above the floor.

Before you buy

- Remember some states have mandatory requirements in place for curtains and blinds.



Safety at home

- ✗ Don't leave your child unsupervised near a corded blind or curtain.
- ✗ Don't put your child's cot, bed, highchair or playpen near a window with corded blinds or curtains.
- ✓ Keep blind and curtain cords out of the reach of children, a child can climb onto furniture and play with a blind or curtain cords.
- ✓ Check with the manufacturer/supplier about modifying your blinds or curtains by using cleats or cord tension devices.

Consumer product standards

There are thousands of voluntary Australian standards on a broad range of goods including nursery furniture and equipment for babies, but only a few of these product standards are mandatory (compulsory by law).

Voluntary standards

A voluntary standard is a published document that sets out specifications and procedures to ensure that a material, product, method or service is fit for its purpose and consistently performs the way it was intended.

Standards are usually formulated in response to demands from the community and are developed by committees representing a range of community, government and industry interests.

Australian standards are written by Standards Australia, which is an independent, non-government organisation whose primary role is to prepare voluntary standards.

In some instances, suppliers choose to have an independent certifying authority examine their processes and certify their product's compliance with certain standards. Such certifying authorities may authorise the use of proprietary certification marks. Undertaking such certification schemes is at the discretion of the supplier

and is not a requirement contained in any standard. However, it may give consumers some added confidence of a supplier's ongoing commitment to conforming with particular standards.

Mandatory standards

Voluntary Australian standards are often used as the basis for mandatory standards under the *Trade Practices Act 1974*. There are two types of mandatory product standards: safety standards and information standards.

Safety standards are declared when products are likely to be hazardous. They require that goods comply with particular performance, composition, contents, design, construction, finish, labelling or packaging rules.

Information standards are introduced if harm to consumers is possible in the absence of information about a product. They require prescribed information to be given to consumers when they buy certain goods.

Enforcing mandatory standards

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission is responsible for enforcing mandatory consumer product safety and information standards, and bans of unsafe goods declared under the Trade Practices Act. A state or territory may have its own product safety standards.

Because preventing injury is better than cure, the ACCC attaches great importance to promoting compliance with the safety provisions as well as to remedial enforcement action.

The ACCC often seeks the immediate withdrawal of defective goods from sale and recall of the goods. Other remedies include injunctions, damages, a requirement for corrective advertising and various ancillary orders such as court enforceable undertakings to ensure future compliance.

Supplying goods that do not comply with a mandatory standard is an offence under the Trade Practices Act and may result in fines of up to \$1.1 million for corporations and \$220 000 for individuals.

For information about state and territory laws contact the relevant consumer affairs or fair trading agency (see contacts at the end of this book).

Product recalls

A substantial number of products are recalled each year because of safety defects. The ACCC operates the Product Recalls Australia website, and advises manufacturers and/or suppliers on how to conduct a voluntary product recall. The website www.recalls.gov.au lists recalled products.

Information on mandatory standards and bans can be obtained from ACCC offices.

Updates on product safety standards are available from the ACCC website:

www.accc.gov.au or by calling the ACCC Infocentre on **1300 302 502**.

Mandatory standards under the Trade Practices Act on items pertaining to children as at June 2009

Babies' dummies

packaging must have a warning notice not to tie the dummy around the baby's neck; also prescribes a safe shield size and shape, ventilation holes, secure teat attachment and structural integrity

Baby bath aids

must carry a visible warning when the child is in the aid, that it is not a safety device, that the baby should be kept in arms reach and that the baby should not be left in the care of children

Baby walkers

must have a mechanism to prevent the walker falling down the steps; be stable; carry a warning label of the need for close supervision and to only use on flat surfaces free of objects that could cause the walker to tip over, to avoid burns keep the child away from hot liquids, ranges, radiators, space heaters, fireplaces, etc; and a separate stair warning visible to the consumer when the child is placed in the walker

Cots for household use

safety and performance standards addressing entrapment hazards

Flotation toys and aquatic toys

some performance requirements and labelling to alert users to correct use and supervision to avoid drowning (to come into effect 1 April 2010)

Lead and certain elements in children's toys

safety and performance standards (to come into effect 1 January 2010)

Portable folding cots

safety and performance standards (to come into effect 1 March 2009)

Prams and strollers

requires the elimination of entrapment hazards and the provision of a restraint harness to prevent falls; a parking device with a red coloured operating handle; a tether strap to help carers retain control; and safe use warning labels

Swimming aids and flotation aids for water familiarisation and swimming tuition

some performance requirements and labelling to alert users to correct use and supervision to avoid drowning (to come into effect 1 April 2010)

Mandatory standards under the Trade Practices Act pertaining to other children's products (or products which may injure children)

Balloon blowing kits	must not contain benzene	Elastic luggage straps	stretch tie-down straps, including octopus straps, must carry a label warning of eye injury if over-stretched
Basketball rings and backboards	must have a warning notice accompanying the product at the time of sale indicating that improper installation or swinging on the ring may cause serious injury and death; a warning label must also be permanently fixed to the backboard	Exercise cycles	moving parts and other entrapment hazards to be isolated by guards, plus specifications for the integrity of the seat
Bean bags	must carry a label warning of the choking hazard; any openings must be child resistant	Fire Footbag and other such goods	designed to be doused in flammable liquid and ignited and then kicked or thrown
Bicycle helmets	performance and safety requirements	Flotation toys and swimming aids for children	some performance requirements and a system of marking to alert users to the correct use to avoid drowning
Bunk beds	to prevent falls and entrapment dangers, provision of guard rails for the upper bunk and elimination of head entrapments in the bunk bed structure	Hot water bottles	physical properties (capacity, wall thickness and filling characteristics: integrity of stoppers (to prevent leakage) performance characteristics (strength of seams, pressure tolerance) informative labelling
Child restraints for motor vehicles	performance and other safety requirements for baby capsules, child seats and other restraints	Pedal bicycles	performance and safety requirements
Children's nightwear and paper patterns for children's nightwear	applies to garments sized 00–14 and includes a limited range of daywear items. Specifies the design, performance and flammability labelling requirements for children's nightwear, including infant sleepbags and limited daywear	Sunglasses and fashion spectacles	performance, safety and labelling requirements
Disposable cigarette lighters	safe use and child resistance requirements	Toys for children up to and including 36 months of age	toys suitable for ages up to 36 months (not just those marked as such) must not contain any small parts which may be a choking hazard, not produce any small parts when put through a range of tests which simulate normal use and abuse

Banned goods pertaining to children

Bead toys containing 1,4-butanediol

1,4-butanediol metabolises in the body into a type of liquid ecstasy, gammahydroxybutyrate, also called 4-hydroxybutyrate. Symptoms of associated poisoning include drowsiness, reduced levels of consciousness and unexplained fits or seizures

Candles with wicks containing lead

burning of lead in confined spaces may pose a health hazard, particularly for small children and pregnant women

Children's dart gun sets

small projectile darts represent a choking hazard if they lodge in the throat

Mini-cup jellies (containing konjac)

at least 15 people have died worldwide from choking on mini-cup jellies containing konjac. Konjac is used as a thickening agent and unlike Gelatine does not readily dissolve in the throat

Toothpaste containing more than 0.25 per cent by weight diethylene glycol (DEG)

DEG is a toxic substance and there have been reports of patient deaths and injuries in other countries over the past several years from ingesting DEG contaminated pharmaceutical preparations such as cough syrup

Toys with a lead migration level greater than 90 parts per million

lead is a toxic substance and it is accepted by health authorities that exposure to lead at significant levels may create unacceptable health risks, particularly to children because it can impede their physical and intellectual development

Contacts

Consumer affairs and fair trading agencies

Commonwealth

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission

Infocentre: 1300 302 502
www.accc.gov.au

Callers who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment can contact the ACCC through the National Relay Service www.relayservice.com.au.

Voice-only (speak and listen) users—
phone 1300 555 727 and
ask for 1300 302 502.

New South Wales

Office of Fair Trading
13 32 20
www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au

Victoria

Consumer Affairs Victoria
1300 558 181
www.consumer.vic.gov.au

Queensland

Fair Trading
13 13 04
www.fairtrading.qld.gov.au

Western Australia

Department of Commerce
1300 304 054
www.commerce.wa.gov.au

South Australia

Office of Consumer and Business Affairs
08 8204 9777
13 18 82
www.ocba.sa.gov.au

Tasmania

Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading
1300 654 499
www.consumer.tas.gov.au

Australian Capital Territory

Fair Trading
02 6207 0400
www.ors.act.gov.au

Northern Territory

Consumer Affairs
08 8999 1999
1800 019 319
www.consumeraffairs.nt.gov.au
Department for Planning

Kidsafe

www.kidsafe.com.au

National office

07 3854 1829

Hunter Valley Region

02 4942 4488

Northern Territory*

08 8985 1085

South Australia

08 8161 6318

Australian Capital Territory*

02 6290 2244

New South Wales

02 9845 0890

Queensland*

07 3854 1829

Tasmania

03 6249 1933

Western Australia*

08 9340 8509

* provides child car restraint hiring

SIDS and Kids

www.sidsandkids.org

1300 308 307

Standards Australia (SAI Global)

Voluntary Australian standards can be
bought from SAI Global

www.saiglobal.com/store

1300 654 646

The Royal Life Saving Society Australia

Infant resuscitation training for parents

www.royallifesaving.com.au

National office

02 8217 3111

Australian Capital Territory

02 6260 5800

New South Wales

02 9634 3700

Northern Territory

08 8981 5036

Queensland

07 3823 2823

South Australia

08 8234 9244

Tasmania

03 6243 7558

Victoria

03 9676 6900

Western Australia

08 9383 8200



Also in this series

Safe toys for kids

Toys are an important part of childhood, helping children learn and develop, as well as entertaining them. Unfortunately, some toys can be dangerous. Poorly constructed toys or toys that are inappropriate for your child's age and level of development can lead to tragic results.

This book is a guide to help you select safe toys for your child.

Available from www.accc.gov.au or order a copy from the ACCC Infocentre 1300 302 502

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